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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ILO CONFERENCE ON EMPLOYMENT IN IRAQ

REF: AMMAN 8460

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SUMMARY  
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1. (SBU) The International Labor Organization (ILO) sponsored a conference in Amman on the role of employment in the reconstruction of Iraq. The Iraqi Ministers of Labor and Planning attended, as well as representatives from international organizations, donor countries, and an Iraqi labor union. Participants praised a U.S. Department of Labor-funded program that creates employment centers. Some participants were angered that only representatives of the Allawi-friendly Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) were invited and no one from the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), which is still identified with the Ba'athist regime (reftel). End Summary.

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Declaration and Plan of Action  
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2. (U) The ILO sponsored an International Conference on Employment in Iraq on December 12-13 in Amman, focusing on the crucial role of employment in rebuilding Iraq. The IIG's Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Leila Abdulatif, and Minister of Planning, Mahdi Hafez, attended, in addition to representatives from the UN, World Bank, IOM, and Iraqi employers' and workers' organizations. The declaration adopted by the conference highlighted the gravity of the unemployment situation in Iraq and directly linked security to the creation of jobs. The plan of action recommended increasing reconstruction-related employment by focusing on labor-intensive instead of capital-intensive methods. The plan calls for the creation of a macroeconomic framework that encourages investment and private enterprise. Strengthening labor market institutions to meet international labor standards was included in the plan as a means to address the social dimension of economic reform. The plan specifically mentions working with women's organizations to ensure equal employment opportunities. The ILO has promised to post the documents produced at the conference to its website at [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

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DOL-Funded Employment Centers  
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3. (SBU) A program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to create integrated employment centers throughout Iraq received positive recognition during the conference. Iraqi Minister of Planning Hafez stated that 600,000 unemployed Iraqis were registered with the centers and that jobs had been found for 200,000 of them. However, Lorena Londo, the IOM project manager who implemented the program, told PolOff that IOM was in the process of withdrawing from the program. Londo did not expect to receive any additional funding to extend IOM's participation. Overall she felt the program was successful given the operating conditions in Iraq. Londo expected the Iraqi Ministry of Labor (MOL) to carry on with the centers for a short time. However, she cautioned that the centers could easily lose out in the battle for funding if management changes within the Iraqi MOL did not provide a leader to champion the program.

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IFTU vs GFTU  
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4. (SBU) The IFTU, a labor federation with close ties to PM Allawi, was the only Iraqi union to participate in the conference. The GFTU, a hold-over from the Ba'athist regime, was conspicuously absent. ILO Regional Director Taleb Rifai expressed disappointment that the GFTU had not been invited to participate in a conference that so directly affected their interests. According to Rifai, all players in the Iraqi labor movement must be included in the dialogue in order to ensure legitimacy. The ILO organized the conference, but clearly Rifai did not play a large role in the planning process. He apologized during the closing session for what he

called "logistical" errors.

15. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.  
HALE